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what-not, later than the book of a year or even a month ago. But the general library is more and more developing an information service, and the business information service must have its collection of books. The big wheels and the little wheels must gear in together for effective result and the problem before all librarians is to get the most result with the least effort, practically the least waste by duplication of effort.

In the training for and practice of business librarians there are those methods dealing with books which are also those of the general librarian and others dealing with special sources which are of a

special nature. The present joint session of the A. L. A. and the S. L. A. is a happy illustration of the need of studying and comparing methods common to both, while a semi-annual or alternative conference of special librarians as such, may well be given over to the special methods of the special field. It is, however, within the local community that co-operation among business librarians can be made most useful and the growth of local special libraries associations in the centers of industry is certainly one of the most gratifying evidences at once of business and library progress.

#### LIBRARY TRAINING FOR THE SPECIAL LIBRARIAN

BY JUNE RICHARDSON DONNELLY, *Director, Simmons College Library School*

When our President, Mr. Hyde, honored me with an invitation to speak to you this morning, he told me to talk about library training, with particular reference to special libraries.

Later the official program gave to this session's topic the subject heading CO-OPERATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND SPECIAL LIBRARIES.

The combination was grateful, for it gave me a chance to express what has long been my settled conviction; that in reality training, whether in a school or by experience, does not make public librarians nor special librarians, primarily, but just librarians, who may have the different environment of a public library or a special library.

Four months ago at Clark University Dr. John Finley said "A certain distinguished university president has defined education as 'adaptation to one's environment.' I do not like the definition, it is not a good definition for human beings. The definition is 'the conquest of one's environment.'"

Now I agree most thoroughly with Dr. Finley. In my conception a good librarian is one who can conquer his environment, whether that be a public library, a college

library, a business library, or any other variety.

Sometimes such a conquest comes by adapting oneself to certain established conditions, again by destroying existing ones that are unfavorable. A wise engineer studies his maps and his ground, he knows the configuration of the land, he judges whether to make a detour to avoid an obstacle or to blast the obstacle from his straight path.

The great modern conqueror is the engineer, and we are bold enough to class librarianship as an engineering project. I am not unaware of my temerity in using such a figure in this company. Though it is not original, I ought to leave it to an engineer to expand, but it expresses my thought.

The librarian's task is to survey the tract he is to administer, to lay out the road systems which will open it up, to decide upon the transportation methods and agents that will be best suited to assemble material at a desired point expeditiously and in prime condition, all with due regard to the kind of produce the tract bears, its destination and intended use.

There is a certain charm, it is true, in a wood, with wandering paths made by

aimless feet, but one does not choose such roads if there is need of arriving quickly at a goal.

In the task of organizing and running a library there is room, according to the size of the job, for the head engineer and often for keen assistants developing toward headship, and so down through the various grades of subordinates, any one of whom may be either the big man of the future, or destined always to remain as one of the undistinguished "gang."

What, then, do we require of a would-be conqueror? First, certain personal qualifications and dispositions. Second, native abilities and education.

I am not going to try to develop all that is implied in those two divisions, your minds will run over rapidly all the characteristics that are usually enumerated as desirable for a librarian, from robust health to angelic tempers.

Native ability is an indispensable prerequisite. There is no reason whatever for supposing that a naturally stupid individual, a low grade mentality, can by any varnish of technical instruction or length of practical experience ever be a good librarian. It is a dreadful pity that such handicapped people exist, but there is no royal touch in library training which will transform them. There may be certain "chores" some of them can perform in a library, but they are no more librarian-stuff than they are potential doctors or captains of industry or anything else that requires healthy brains.

One service we owe to the library profession is to discourage such people from trying to become librarians, and to labor to prevent employers from supposing that a library is a fit field for them.

We all know how much a person of great native ability can achieve without much formal education and we sincerely honor the selfmade man; but, other things being equal, the better the education before technical training begins, the more desirable the candidate who would enter upon library work.

Every branch of knowledge that has been opened up to him adds to his value, both because of the special knowledge it adds to his equipment, and because it gives him a broader conception of life and a better basis for comparison.

So, for every librarian, I should like to have a good general foundation, plus a certain understanding of whatever specialty his work requires, and the wider and deeper that understanding the better.

To my mind every librarian is as much a specialist as the business or science librarian. Only, the specialty of children's librarian needs is of one type and that of the librarian of an industry which produces dyestuffs or one that makes electrical appliances is of another.

The opposing term to public library is not special library, but private library, and the error in classification implied in opposing public and special, if I may so say without rudeness, I think is responsible for a confusion of thought that has led to unnecessary friction.

Whatever the content of knowledge that education has left as a residuum, though, is subordinate to whether the educative process has left a person "educable," able to throw away old knowledge, to scrap false theories and worn out methods and continuously to survey anew each library experience that comes to him, recognizing the problems involved and thinking them through straight.

Given this paragon you will probably tell me that he would make a good librarian without any special library training. I grant you he probably would. Please let me make myself clear. When it comes to a choice between a person of fine native ability, with good education but no library science knowledge, as opposed to a library school graduate of mediocre ability and average education—and such exist—I should choose the former without a moment's hesitation.

But at present it is not such a choice I am thinking of, for I have expressly stipulated for the good qualities of ability and

prevocational education in a would-be conqueror, and I go back to him. The point is, wouldn't he be a better librarian, with less waste of time, if he could start in informed of methods of organizing material, cataloging and indexing it, acquainted with existing tools and on the look-out for new ones; able to compare methods, with appreciation of their use for attaining an end desired?

Why make him work through all the stages of development through which the librarians of the past have risen, when he might as well begin at the latest stage and take advantage of the acceleration of evolution.

The burro is a very useful animal in the Grand Canon, but a Rolls-Royce is more suited to less primitive trails.

Whatever the kind of library, the successful person will be the one who knows his community, his clientele, his stock of resources, whether books or other kinds, and can use the best of library science methods to make the resources serve the clientele.

This will seem a big preamble to reach the specific subject I was set, that of library training for the special library.

I should like to divide consideration of that into two parts: First, what I should plan if I had a free hand; second, what actually, even now is available in existing library schools. No, that is too broad a statement, I can speak only for the school I know best.

I should like, then, a good supply of educable people, of good native ability and varied in their previous education and tasks. Then, for a year, I should like to have those planning for public, college, or other libraries. For the first part of the year, say from September to March, I should give to them all the same core of library science, including bibliography, cataloging, indexing, reference and research work.

Those are equally necessary to all the students, but should be taught with all types of libraries in mind. Or it would be better to say that classification, for ex-

ample, should be taught as a science, not as a mere system of assigning numerical symbols. The various special classifications are as necessary to a person whose sole work may later be with the D. C. in a small public library as to one who has to develop a scheme for a highly specialized collection.

The third term I should allow differentiation in the curriculum for the members of the class, allowing each to "major" according to his or her desires, as far as that could be provided for, with the necessarily restricted facilities available.

The line in which one would major would doubtless follow his previous education, experience, or interest.

He should visit places of the type that would fit his purposes, whether factories, banks, science libraries or museums. All library schools require some field work, and his should be in the kind of library he has in view.

He should study more intensively the "literature of his subject," and the reference books and sources of special information, and work out real problems in obtaining information. He should get as wide an acquaintance with periodicals in his special line as possible, and practice digesting articles.

Finally, he should be given the general problem of supposing he was set the task of organizing and running a library of the type desired, and work out his solution. It might not be a correct one, but he would become acquainted with the snags and possibilities, so that when the actual chance came, he would not start in ignorance.

Such adaptation of the curriculum is perfectly possible, all that stands in the way is lack of funds to finance it, unless there is sufficient demand for it to justify the outlay.

The future will provide for it, but what is there at present?

Even now, in all the schools, classification, bibliography and reference courses are valuable to one wishing to be a special librarian, as is the course in public

## SWAMPSCOTT CONFERENCE

documents and much of the study of library methods.

This year, for the first time, Simmons College offered an elective course called "Special Libraries." Eighteen students of the seniors and college graduates elected the course.

Between March and June, for ten weeks, the class met twice a week, and were allowed two hours a week after each class hour for study.

The test used was Miss Krause's *Business Libraries*, and, I should perhaps add, the periodical *Special Libraries*.

The course was begun with an address by Carlos Houghton—WHAT IS A SPECIAL LIBRARY,—read by many of you later in the *Library Journal*. It closed with a talk by George W. Lee on INFORMATION SERVICE.

In between, in every alternative class-hour, a librarian of some special library described his particular institution.

Under the surface differences, it was extraordinarily interesting to see the underlying unity in their purposes and methods.

Those of us who were public library workers were equally interested to see how fundamentally alike were public and special library ideals, and even methods.

It has been said that the distinctive feature of the special library is service. I should like to emphasize that that is not distinctive of special libraries only, but is the slogan of our profession. We are not two professions, but a united one, as I think this meeting well indicates.

## ADULT EDUCATION

## A LETTER FROM DR. CHARLES W. ELIOT

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., JUNE 7, 1921.

DEAR MISS TYLER:

As I wrote to you last January, the subject of adult education has been interesting thoughtful Americans more and more for several years past; and I am glad to have an opportunity of saying something about it to the American Library Association at its forthcoming meeting at Swampscott through this letter.

We used to think of education as chiefly for children before the age of fifteen. For a small minority of children we extended the period of education through a high school course which ordinarily brought them to about eighteen years of age. For a still smaller fraction of the rising generation we extended the idea of education through the college period. It was the Chautauquas and the summer courses of instruction which first spread among thoughtful Americans the idea that education ought to go on throughout life in some universities in the intervals of work for the livelihood.

The elementary and secondary schools down to the opening of the twentieth century were seldom successful in implanting in their pupils a love of reading, a real delight which in later years determined a precious use of a good part of their leisure by grown-up people who were earning their own livelihood. If any child fortunately acquired a love of reading, it was due, not

to the school or the teacher, but to the father or mother and a home habit. Indeed, before printing and the Protestant Reformation people that could read were great rarities; and so were books. Since 1900 there has been a considerable improvement in respect to implanting in school children the love of reading; but much still remains to be done. American and English publishers have lately contributed considerably to the satisfaction of the desire of the new generation for good reading. They have put at the disposal of the public good encyclopaedias, and dictionaries which are also encyclopaedias. They have issued collections of selected writings, ancient and modern, and products of various nationalities, which are real treasures for the lover of reading, young or old, educated or uneducated. Some publishers supply in cheap form a stream of books which have already commended themselves to a generation of reading people. Local clubs circulate at low cost not only the best magazines and illustrated papers, but also the best current books. In many cities well-organized classes for evenings and Saturday afternoons prolong the period of systematic education for youth who have been obliged to go to work by the time they were fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen years of age.

This prolongation of systematic education and the increasing success of schools